



August 27, 2025

Ms. Rachael Ray  
c/o Rachael Ray Foundation  
276 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 704-3132  
New York, New York 10001

Dear Ms. Ray,

We are writing in response to your recent letter to California state lawmakers opposing Senate Bill 682, which would ban cookware containing the non-stick PFAS “forever chemical” polytetrafluoroethylene, or PTFE. We implore you to reconsider your position. As a high-profile figure in cooking, your influence can help build support for this critical health measure.

In your letter, you urge lawmakers to “look closely at the science before moving forward with legislation” and that “PTFEs, when manufactured and used responsibly, are proven to be safe and effective.” In effect, you are claiming this family of PFAS presents no harm to humans, animals and the environment. We respectfully disagree.

**PFAS in cookware: health and environmental concerns**

Independent science, including research cited by California’s Department of Toxic Substances Control, shows that PFAS — including PTFE polymers used in cookware — are highly persistent, can persist and spread in the environment and can transform into other forms of PFAS that are well documented as being toxic.

Exposure to these chemicals has been linked to cancer, hormone disruption, reduced fertility, liver disease, developmental harm, and immune suppression. For this reason, California, 23 other states and the European Union regulate PFAS as a class, including polymers like PTFE.

According to manufacturers, PTFE used in cookware can flake off, be scratched off, and/or degrade on pots and pans over time. These pieces of PTFE coating are microplastics carrying PFAS, which collect in cooked food that consumers ingest. Independent research is finding that microplastics, including those from fluoropolymers used in cookware, are a growing concern for human health. PTFE microplastics have been found in urine and semen and researchers are linking PTFE microplastics with reduced sperm counts.

In addition, fumes released from heated PTFE pans also pose health risks. The makers of PTFE warn that empty pots and pans reach high temperatures quickly, causing the coating to deteriorate. They also expressly tell consumers not to put pet birds in the kitchen when using PTFE-coated pans because they can become sick and die due to fumes released from overheated pans. Harmful effects in birds have been seen when heating pans as low as 326°F.

These fumes impact humans too, causing a condition, known as “Teflon Flu,” which mimics common flu-like symptoms. The Washington Post reported that there were hundreds of cases of suspected “Teflon Flu” in 2024. Consider how many more people experienced symptoms of Teflon Flu but didn’t connect it using pans in their kitchen.

### **A costly public burden**

In addition to the serious health risks posed by PFAS, they also create costly and compounding burdens for the public and the state.

Cleanup of contaminated drinking water is already essential for the estimated 25 million Californians with detectable levels of PFAS in their tap water. The continued production, use, and disposal of PFAS-laden consumer products — like cookware — will only drive those cleanup costs, including higher water bills and prolong the cycle of contamination.

The true costs of PFAS stretch far beyond water bills. The health care burden alone is staggering, conservatively estimated at \$5.5 to \$8.7 billion every year in California, and that figure reflects only a fraction of the many harms tied to the most thoroughly studied PFAS.

The scale of these costs makes clear that half measures to tackling the harms from forever chemicals are not enough. It is imperative that the state and companies act decisively to eliminate unnecessary uses of PFAS, including in cookware.

As one of the most visible public figures in cooking, your leadership carries tremendous influence with millions of consumers. We applaud the work you’ve advanced through the Rachael Ray Foundation and Yum-o!, making a meaningful difference for families, animals, and communities nationwide.

That same dedication to the public good is why we urge you to leverage your platform not to defend PTFE, but to advocate for safer alternatives and insist on greater corporate accountability. Consumers and families deserve cookware that is free from toxic chemicals. They should also have a full accounting of the risks tied to products currently on the market.

We hope you will take this opportunity to reverse your position, support SB 682 and to join other leaders in the movement toward safe, sustainable cookware.

Sincerely,

Environmental Working Group

Clean Water Action California